



**HAMILTON BOARD OF HEALTH**  
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**July 19, 2011**

**Reminder On The Dangers Of Hot Weather**

The National Weather Service is forecasting excessive heat for our area this week especially for Friday. Heat is the number one weather-related killer in the United States. Heat causes more fatalities per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes and hurricanes combined. In the disastrous heat wave of 1980, more than 1,250 people died. In the heat wave of 1995 more than 700 deaths in the Chicago area were attributed to heat. In August 2003, a record heat wave in Europe claimed an estimated 50,000 lives.

**Too Much Heat**

Heat related illnesses occur when the body absorbs more heat than it can dissipate caused by a reduction or collapse of the body's ability to shed heat. When heat gain exceeds the level the body can remove, or when the body cannot compensate for fluids and salt lost through perspiration, the temperature of the body's inner core begins to rise. Heat related illnesses range in severity but share one common feature: the individual has been overexposed or over exercised in the heat.

In adults, the severity of heat disorders tend to increase with age, heat cramps in a 17-year-old may be heat exhaustion in someone 40, and heat stroke in a person over 60. The effects can be more severe on children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults. Sunburn can significantly retard the skin's ability to shed excess heat.

**Know The Signs & Symptoms**

**HEAT CRAMPS:** Painful spasms usually in muscles of legs and abdomen possible. Heavy sweating. First Aid: Firm pressure on cramping muscles, or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue.

**HEAT EXHAUSTION:** Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Pulse thready. Normal temperature possible. Fainting and vomiting. First Aid: Get victim out of sun. Lie down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned room. Sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue. If vomiting continues, seek immediate medical attention.

**HEAT STROKE (sunstroke):** High body temperature (hyperthermia) (106° F or higher). Hot dry skin. Rapid and strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. First Aid: **HEAT STROKE IS A SEVERE MEDICAL EMERGENCY. SUMMON EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, 9-1-1 OR GET THE VICTIM TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY. DELAY CAN BE FATAL.** Move the victim to a cooler environment Reduce body temperature with cold bath or sponging. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing, use fans and air conditioners.

**Children, Adults, and Pets in Parked Vehicles are at Great Risk**

Each year children die from hyperthermia as a result of being left in parked vehicles. This can occur even on a mild day. The temperature inside a parked vehicle can rise rapidly to a dangerous level. **Leaving the windows slightly open does not significantly decrease the heating rate.**

**Vehicle Heating Dynamics**

The atmosphere and the windows of a car are relatively "transparent" to the sun's shortwave radiation and are warmed little by it. This shortwave energy however, does heat objects that it strikes. These objects (e.g., dashboard, steering wheel, child safety seat) heat the adjacent air that is trapped inside a vehicle. A dark dashboard or seat can easily reach temperatures in the range of 180 to over 200 degrees F.

## Heat Wave Safety Tips

- **Slow down.** Reduce, eliminate or rescheduled strenuous activities until the coolest time of the day. Children, senior and anyone with health problems should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.
- **Cool down.** Take a cool shower or soak in the tub or go for a swim.
- **Dress for summer.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing to reflect heat and sunlight.
- **Put less fuel on your inner fires.** Foods like meat and other proteins increase metabolic heat production and increase water loss.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you don't feel thirsty. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease, are on fluid restrictive diets or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids.
- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages and limited caffeinated beverages.**
- **Spend time in air-conditioned places.** Air conditioning in homes and other buildings markedly reduces danger from the heat. If you cannot afford an air conditioner, go to a library, store or other location with air conditioning for part of the day.
- **Avoid direct sun.** Especially in the middle of the day. Sunburn reduced your body's ability to dissipate heat.
- **Do not take salt tablets** unless specified by a physician.
- **Take frequent breaks,** if you have to work in the heat pay close attention for signs and symptoms of heat related illness.

## Child Safety Tips

- **Check to make sure seating surfaces and equipment aren't too hot** (e.g., child safety seat and safety belt buckles) when securing a child in a car that has been parked in the heat.
- **Never leave a child unattended** in a vehicle, even with the windows down.
- **Teach children not to play** in, on, or around cars.
- **Always lock car** doors and trunks even at home and keep keys out of children's reach.
- **Make sure all child passengers have left the car** when you reach your destination. Don't overlook sleeping infants. Don't leave a child sleeping in a parked vehicle.

This information was compiled from the National Weather Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross.